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Climate Insecurity in (Post)Conflict Areas: The Biopolitics of United Nations Vulnerability Assessments

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Abstract

Within the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have all highlighted climate risks as relevant to their (post)conflict work, endorsing human security approaches as valid for mapping the relationships between climate stresses and conflict-related harm. While this policy interest has limited operational presence, I discuss salient assessments of climate vulnerability in (post)conflict areas, arguing that these agencies have applied a natural disaster rather than conflict regulation inflection of humanitarian reason. The former entails a biopolitical paradigm of disaster risk reduction, prescribing technical-managerial measures to build the resilience of vulnerable populations. This framing supports a depoliticised stance reflecting UN norms of neutrality and impartiality. I claim that this position nevertheless disregards its own geopolitical conditions and effects, which dilute the scope for international humanitarian law to assign responsibility for conflict-related harm.

International humanitarian and development actors have shown growing interest in how climate change may impact on vulnerable populations in (post)conflict areas. Within the United Nations (UN) system, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have all highlighted climate risks as relevant to their work in conflict-affected regions, including climate change adaptation (UNDP), post-conflict environmental assessments (UNEP), and disaster risk management (OCHA). By "(post)conflict" is meant areas with current or recent historical experience of violent conflict and/or foreign military occupation. Notwithstanding their different mandates, all three UN agencies have identified climate vulnerability as a legitimate thematic concern for assessing the potential sources of insecurity in societies marred by conflict.

Climate insecurity denotes a condition under which the effects of climate variability and/or change are represented as threatening to a group of affected actors. This definition mirrors the claim, made both by critical geopolitics and securitisation theory, that climate insecurity is realised by discursive practices invoking (current or projected) climatic events as an existential threat, thereby justifying urgent measures in response.[1] The constructivist thrust of this formulation has challenged a larger body of mainstream analysis, much of it flowing from think-tanks and NGOs, seeing climate change as an externally received danger to countries and populations. Threats to national security are the dominant concern, with dislocative impacts on sovereign states anticipated in the wake of more extreme climate stresses. An influential thesis in this state-centred discourse is that, for poorer regions of the world already subject to political instability and violent conflict, climate change will act as a "threat multiplier".[2] At a geopolitical level, Western anxieties about the damaging spillover effects from threat multiplication in these volatile regions have led to the incorporation of climate change as a security concern in national intelligence assessments and military planning.

An alternative pathway of securitisation assigns vulnerable people as the subject to be made safe in the face of serious climate risks. The notion of human security, as developed over two decades within the UN system, identifies insecurity in whatever chronic threats and disruptive events endanger core human needs. As noted below, there is no settled specification of human security; however, a growing body of social scientific research is applying human security ideas to climate change and other global environmental problems.[3] From this scholarship has emerged an interest in how climate threats to human security may be magnified in (post)conflict settings.[4] For UN bodies with operational mandates in such areas, climate risk management therefore overlaps with humanitarian interventions designed to protect vulnerable civilians and their livelihood contexts. So-called "complex emergencies",[5] where violent conflict causes a total or considerable breakdown

of authority and major human suffering, may be exacerbated by climate stresses, although international assistance is typically and understandably preoccupied with delivering immediate relief.

Human security thinking marks out as a global political norm the protection of populations at risk. Its close affinity with humanitarianism is particularly clear when addressing climate risks in (post)conflict areas, because in these settings the two principal referents of humanitarian action – natural disasters and armed conflict – converge. Human security, like humanitarianism, highlights serious risks to the lives of people; and in regions prone to violence, securing life can legitimate external measures, under "responsibility to protect", that challenge the sovereign authority of the host or controlling state.[6] Not all commentators are sanguine about this: critical scholars have charged human security as a "biopolitical technology of governance" designed to manage climate risks in a way that renders them less threatening to Western geopolitical and geo-economic interests.[7] As elaborated in the next section, the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics identifies regimes of power that have as their target the biological attributes of populations, entailing the deployment of particular techniques of security.[8] Drawing on recent formulations of biopolitical power, I argue that the convergence of climate change and humanitarianism generates distinctive rationalities of human insecurity. At the same time, geopolitical modes of securitisation are not absent, for state security imperatives condition and constrain efforts to protect vulnerable people from conflict-mediated climate dangers. The core aim of this paper is critically to apply this biopolitical lens to examine UN assessments of climate vulnerability in (post)conflict areas.

Below I identify UN framings of climate vulnerability addressing populations affected by violent conflict. At the strategic level, climate risks are constructed as part of an emergency temporality justifying humanitarian and development assistance in these contexts, as evident in policy statements and other agency reports. OCHA, UNDP and UNEP have all endorsed human security approaches as valid for mapping the relationships between climate stresses and conflict-related harm. This policy interest still has limited operational presence, though I discuss salient assessments of climate vulnerability in (post)conflict areas, arguing that these agencies have applied a *natural disaster* rather than *conflict regulation* inflection of humanitarian action. The former entails a biopolitical paradigm of disaster risk reduction, prescribing technical-managerial measures to build the resilience of vulnerable populations. Yet, as I claim, this assumes a depoliticised stance, which reflecting UN norms of neutrality and deference to geopolitical realities, dilutes moves under international humanitarian law (IHL) to assign responsibility for conflict-related harm.

HUMANITARIANISM, HUMAN SECURITY AND CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

Global humanitarian governance comprises a distinctive set of policies and instruments, which are designed to limit the harm caused by disasters and armed conflict. The construction of climate change impacts as a humanitarian concern has found its principal justification in the humanitarian tradition of risk reduction and relief provision with reference to "natural disasters". For both the UN and humanitarian NGOs this categorisation is strengthened by claims that human-induced climate change is making extreme weather events more frequent, intense and enduring, with disproportionate effects on socially vulnerable and marginalised groups.[9] At the same time, it also reflects the onset, since the late 1980s, of a dramatic growth in humanitarian action, put down to post-Cold War shifts in global politics, such as the increasing willingness of states to support humanitarian assistance, a governance concern with minimising the negative side-effects of new global interdependencies, and the need to address complex, conflict-laden humanitarian crises.[10] Responses by the international community to complex emergencies mark a step-change in humanitarian agency, moving from event-specific relief operations to protracted external interventions. For Craig Calhoun, who sees the idea of emergency – a sudden, unpredictable event causing suffering or danger – as a core justification for modern humanitarianism, climate change and other forms of environmental degradation are increasingly drawn into social imaginaries of emergency, including areas subject to armed conflict.[11] At the same time, a growing overlap between military operations and humanitarian interventions invites the possibility that climate change could be securitised to support moves by state actors to control natural resources or block movements of people displaced by environmental collapse.

A number of authors have applied, and extended, Foucault's account of biopolitics – the historical rise of regimes of power concerned with the biological management of populations – to examine the securitisation of biotechnological and wider environmental changes.[12] For example, Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero identify a profound transformation of life itself as a result of molecular and digital revolutions, threatening the stability and safety of "species being". In a risky, contingent world, biopolitical security is distinguished from geopolitical security in seeking an optimal circulation of life opportunities rather than protecting a sovereign state from external enemies or dangers.[13] Human security is emblematic of biopolitics insofar as it concerns governmental practices which address the health and welfare of populations: in humanitarian emergencies this entails urgent interventions, often by external actors, claiming to protect people from immediate danger and to assist in meeting their basic needs. In parallel with responses to climate risks, these practices

prioritise effective anticipation of, and adaptation to, major stresses – what is increasingly labelled "resilience" after related concepts in psycho-social and biophysical sciences.[14] Risk calculation and assessment is a common biopolitical technique for addressing both climate change and violent conflict, which share a futurity of catastrophic harm or at least serious threats to life. Grove, for example, reveals how the employment by the UN and World Bank of climate risk management and insurance tools underwrites the biopolitical management of insecure populations in fragile or failed states. Such tools draw on scientific modelling and economic accounting to generate probabilistic forecasts about future losses.[15] The volatility of violent conflict may seem to defy such predictive analysis. Yet humanitarian interventions in conflict areas also feature the careful assessment of costs and benefits according to principles of necessity, proportionality and efficiency – what Weizman labels the economy of violence.[16] In both cases, securing human lives involves classifying and managing resilience in the face of serious threats.

There are distinctive spatialities associated with the humanitarian governance of natural disasters and conflicts. The notion of a "globalized biopolitics" refers both to the extraterritoriality and extralegality of modern humanitarianism.[17] First, its spatial reach is expansive, encompassing the transnational mobility of humanitarian actors and their professed global concern with vulnerable human lives wherever suffering is found. Human security, as a biopolitical category, directs attention to precarious contexts of living which are often shaped by global processes of social and ecological change.[18] Second, a globalized biopolitics does not float free of sovereign state power. From this perspective, Duffield claims that human security embodies Western geopolitical interests as a means of containing the spillover effects of weak and failed states, defining it as "effective states prioritizing the well-being of populations living within ineffective ones."[19] The extralegal aspect is attributed to a state of exception – the suspension of conventional rule-making in response to a declared emergency – which draws military and humanitarian logics into uneasy coexistence. While this condition is not exclusive to (post)conflict areas (for example, the state of emergency created in 1999 by the Venezuelan government in response to heavy flooding and landslides), it has more salience for complex emergencies and other conflict-related conditions.[20] The geopolitical selectivity of humanitarian governance in areas of armed conflict reflects ongoing tensions between the universal scope of IHL and the strategic interests of states (and international organisations) that support protective interventions in some regions but not others.

Populations facing or recovering from armed conflict are especially vulnerable to climate variability and extremes because of impaired coping options and low adaptive capacity.[21] In its contribution to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Working

Group II states that fragile governance systems and violent conflicts typically heighten the vulnerability of people to climate risks, though only with reference to Africa.[22] However, these are tentative claims, and the IPCC has since acknowledged that there is the need for more systematic research on the climate change-conflict nexus, including the more controversial thesis that climate change stresses may increase the risk of violent conflict.[23] This topic is briefly discussed in a recent special report on managing the risks of climate extremes (SREX), with conflict tendencies attributed to local, climate-induced impacts on human security.[24] In its SREX report the IPCC defines human security as "safety from such chronic acts as hunger, disease and repression and …protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, jobs or communities."[25] Though not cited, this definition reproduces a seminal definition of human security presented by UNDP.[26] Since the mid-1990s, this formulation has appeared in a number of UNDP-sponsored National Human Development Reports, including those covering such volatile, conflict-prone countries as Afghanistan, East Timor, Iraq and Sierra Leone.[27] Environmental degradation constitutes a separate category of threat to human security in this framework with climate change seen as an ever greater risk to basic freedoms: by 2007 UNDP described climate change as arguably the greatest challenge facing global poverty reduction and human development efforts.[28] To be sure, the Human Development Report Office has an organisational autonomy within UNDP, which has limited its influence over projects and operational activities, including the agency's major role as implementer of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects through the Global Environment Facility.[29] There is a gap between the thematic treatment of human security in HDR reports and climate vulnerability assessments within UNDP-assisted National Adaptation Programmes of Action under the UN climate change convention, though the latter reports tend to be people-centred in content. In the next section I highlight one UNDP-funded climate adaptation project in a (post)conflict area, the occupied Palestinian territory, which encountered tensions between biophysical and conflict-related representations of climate insecurity.

The broad notion of human security developed by UNDP has achieved some policy traction in the UN.[30] OCHA, the lead agency directing humanitarian responses to conflict-related and environmental emergencies, is ambitiously tasked with mainstreaming human security across the UN system and, since 2009, has also made climate change a thematic focus for its humanitarian advocacy.[31] However, the Human Security Unit run by OCHA has struggled with budgetary constraints, inter-agency competition and a lack of understanding of human security by UN Country teams.[32] As noted in the next section, OCHA work on climate vulnerability in Central and East Africa offers the most prominent example of an operational convergence of its climate change and human security advocacy. There is more evidence of a broad human security framing informing

recent post-conflict environmental assessments conducted by UNEP, as well as its environmental peacebuilding activities within the multi-agency Environment and Security Initiative. Over time, UNEP post-conflict assessments have adopted a social vulnerability lens registering people-based insecurities around environmental resource needs and threatened livelihoods, although only more recently engaging with climate change.[33] Below I discuss two post-conflict environmental assessments, conducted by UNEP in Sudan (2007) and Rwanda (2011), which feature significant treatments of climate vulnerability.

Makaremi argues that, since the 1990s, the development interpretation of human security promoted by the UN has faced competition from a narrower interpretation focused on protecting people from violence. At least in part, he attributes this to a geopolitical appropriation of human security as an instrument of foreign policy by several state powers – notably Japan, Norway and Canada – and the European Union.[34] This reading, which concedes that "populations" remain as the principal referent of security, nevertheless pinpoints a temporal evolution in human security in the context of Western anxieties about terrorism and other expressions of global disorder, with the international legal distinctions between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" violence becoming unstable.[35] By shifting the (in)security lens from social and ecological conditions of life to the bodily or corporeal vulnerability on individuals, states and their militaries receive renewed justification as the principal agents for controlling or managing the means of violence. Of course, in (post)conflict spaces such actors may also be <u>responsible for violence</u>, raising questions about the international legality of violent practices employed to further state and/or human security. With specific responsibilities in (post)conflict areas, OCHA, UNDP and UNEP all share a commitment to IHL. This raises the substantive question, addressed in the next section, of how conflict situations and legacies feed into their assessments of climate vulnerability.

From a humanitarian law perspective, climate harm exacerbates the existing legal indeterminacy of IHL regarding the cause and scope of impermissible environmental damage.[36] There is ongoing disagreement amongst states over the threshold at which armed violence may be categorised as conflict under IHL, despite accepted criteria on intensity and spatial (territorial) extent.[37] Even if IHL is accepted as applicable in a conflict situation, it is not clear how the general humanitarian principles of (military-civilian) distinction, military necessity and proportionality can assist in protecting civilian populations from increased environmental harm as a result of warfare – an uncertainty exacerbated for the slow onset but volatile effects of climate change. There are practical reasons, then, for humanitarian agencies to prefer a "natural disasters" template when addressing the climate vulnerability of people scarred by armed conflict and military occupation.[38] Non-

binding international norms, such as the Hyogo Framework for Action on Disaster Risk Management, offer familiar and flexible guidance for dealing with climate hazards.[39] This, indeed, was the conceptual starting-point for a Task Force on Climate Change convened in 2009-10 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee – the leading international forum for coordinating the work of UN and non-UN humanitarian actors.[40] However, a key question then arises as to whether the policy preference of UN agencies for a disaster risk reduction approach has occluded issues of responsibility for <u>conflict-related</u> environmental harm. How does a biopolitical logic of climate insecurity, concerned with the resilience of vulnerable populations, reflect the sovereign authority of host states and their responsibilities under IHL? In the next section of the paper I examine these questions by drawing on relevant climate assessments in (post)conflict areas.

UN CLIMATE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS IN POST(CONFLICT) AREAS

For OCHA the added value of a human security approach in (post)conflict settings is as a people-centred, collaborative framework attuned to the perceived insecurities and concrete needs of affected populations. Countries subject to, or emerging from, violent conflicts are viewed as more than developmental failures – they are seen as unstable, often highly volatile, spaces in which the pervasive threat and use of violence eviscerates state institutions and societal structures.[41] Climate change impacts, it is claimed, threaten to exacerbate both existing grievances over natural resources and conflict-related weaknesses in the provision of basic services.[42] Since 1994 the Emergency Services Branch of OCHA has hosted a dedicated unit (in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme) to coordinate international assistance to countries facing "environmental emergencies" – disasters or accidents (natural and/or human-induced) causing or threatening to cause severe environmental damage with serious losses to human lives and property. As with other disaster assessment within OCHA, international assistance is deemed necessary when such emergencies overwhelm national response capacities. In line with IPCC projections of an increase in the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme climate-related events (e.g. high temperature and precipitation events, flooding sea level rise and drought), climate change impacts are anticipated to trigger a marked expansion in the scope and scale of environmental emergencies.[43]

The monsoon floods striking Pakistan in 2010 and 2011 are cited in a Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit report to as an example of how climate change can have a compounding effect on environmental emergency responses, rendering relief and recovery efforts fragile if they do not incorporate long-term climatic trends.[44] Pakistan has been a test case for humanitarian responses to

an environmental crisis in a (post)conflict setting, at least in the north-west of the country where, since 2009, there have been violent clashes between the Pakistan military and pro-Taliban militants, although there is also as an older, intermittent conflict in the south-west (Balochistan) between government forces and separatists. As OCHA designated the conflict in the north-west as a complex emergency, where the Pakistan military had been engaged in combat operations, it sought to follow established "MCDA guidelines" ("Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies") limiting use of military assistance that may be seen as compromising the neutrality and impartiality of international humanitarian agencies. This stance had practical implications given that the Pakistan military was the principal state vehicle for disaster relief, but was charged by some humanitarian groups with offering assistance only to loyal communities in flood-affected conflict areas. The MCDA positioning caused splits in the wider UN humanitarian response, as well as tensions with OCHA's own responses to flooding in other parts of the country. Indeed, OCHA food security assessments and relief efforts in flood-affected areas varied between "natural disaster" areas and "complex emergency" areas, while the Pakistan government and other humanitarian agencies viewed all flood impacts as a purely natural disaster.[45] Independent evaluations of humanitarian responses in Pakistan reported weaknesses arising from divergent agency assessments of the needs of affected persons. Illustrative of a major gap between OCHA policy pronouncements and operational commitments, neither human security nor climate change framings informed disaster and early recovery assessments. While humanitarian actors participating in flood relief efforts embraced vulnerability as an organising category for needs analysis – e.g. FAO work on food security and livelihood loss – there was no common conceptual matrix for analysing vulnerability.[46]

The most ambitious OCHA programme addressing climate vulnerability in a (post)conflict region examines climate change impacts on pastoralism in Central and East Africa. Established in 2009 by the OCHA regional office in Nairobi, the programme facilitates inter-agency communication on current and future climate stresses on pastoralist communities, as well as strategies to foster effective adaptive practices. Climate change, as manifest in a higher frequency and intensity of droughts, is predicted to escalate armed, inter-communal conflicts over access to water and grazing land.[47] The programme adopts a disaster risk reduction optic in which the mitigation of pastoralist vulnerability to climate impacts is promoted by such technical interventions as drought preparedness planning and improved disaster management. Pastoralist insecurity is conceived broadly, covering both protection from violence and needs-based threats (e.g. food insecurity and livelihood insecurity). It is treated most explicitly in one of the inter-agency partnerships – Security in Mobility – created by OCHA under this pastoralist programme.[48] The safe movement of

pastoralists within and across national borders is seen as pivotal to sustaining their livelihood needs in the face of increasing climate stresses. In biopolitical terms, security is associated with the free circulation of valued communities. This concern with building the resilience of affected populations has incorporated extensive consultations with pastoralists from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Ethiopia and Southern Sudan, including their perceptions on the effects of climate variability and change. Pastoralists' own assessments have highlighted geopolitical moves impinging on their lives and livelihoods; for example the spatial exclusion of pastoralists by the Tanzanian government from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in the north of the country and government discrimination against Somali pastoralists in Kenya's North Eastern Province.[49] State complicity in pastoralist insecurity, including the toleration of lawlessness and arms proliferation, contributes to the perpetuation of violence – an issue raised more emphatically by OCHA outside the Security in Mobility initiative.[50] Although this raises human rights concerns, state responsibility under IHL is diluted by the low intensity and inter-communal character of the armed violence, creating obstacles to the application of conflict-related humanitarian norms.

In the case of the Darfur conflict, the Sudanese government, it is claimed, has tried to escape its responsibility for large-scale violence by attributing hostilities to regional climate change, seemingly supported in this view by the UN Secretary General, citing a UNEP post-conflict environmental assessment.[51] While the latter study cautioned against reductionist accounts of the civil war, it still maintained that, at least for Darfur, climate instability and change (alongside environmental degradation) were major underlying causes of the conflict, as collapsing pastoralist livelihoods caused by desertification and protracted drought exacerbated tribal and ethnic tensions.[52] The UNEP report, one of the most comprehensive assessments managed by its Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch, was integrated into national policy processes and a Sudan Country Analysis conducted by the UN Country Team.[53] It undertook a climate risk assessment, relying technically on a previous UNFCCC-assisted national study, which concluded that drought, desertification and floods (both natural and human-induced) contribute significantly to conflict, population displacement and food insecurity.[54] Under UN norms of neutrality, UNEP has assisted both the Sudanese and South Sudanese governments with environmental capacity-building, although allegations remain levelled at political leaders in Khartoum regarding serious human rights abuses and repeated violations of IHL. Alongside UNDP, UNEP has worked closely with the Sudanese government to develop a climate change adaptation plan under its UNFCCC responsibilities. Both the UN agencies and the government treated this national adaptation planning as a technical-managerial exercise, conspicuously avoiding any conflict-related assessment of

climate vulnerability. In the Sudanese Adaptation Programme of Action delivered in 2007 to UNFCCC, there is only a passing reference to the conflict in Darfur as an inter-tribal clash.[55]

As UNEP post-conflict environmental assessments become more extensive in thematic scope and more supportive of governance and development interventions in host countries, the political context of its assistance assumes more importance. This reflects in part the increasing ambition and operational authority of UNEP, which has identified an important role for environmental cooperation as a vehicle for peacebuilding in societies emerging from conflict. The long-term goal of fostering resilient, sustainable livelihoods in natural resource-dependent populations has opened up the issue of political ownership of policy recommendations arising from UNEP post-conflict assessments; yet these assessments are, by design, technical and depoliticised.[56] As Matthew and Hammill argue, climate change adaptation offers significant potential as a long-term vehicle for peacebuilding addressed to institutional capacity and community resilience.[57] UNEP support for this position suggests that climate change adaptation is now a test bed for biopolitical interventions in (post)conflict areas. For example, following an influential post-conflict assessment in Afghanistan highlighting serious environmental threats to livelihoods, UNEP is now implementing climate change adaptation activities in agricultural communities deemed to be particularly vulnerable to climate variability and change, and has assisted the UN Country Team in Afghanistan in developing natural resource management and climate adaptive actions informed by peacebuilding aims.[58]

The UNEP post-conflict assessment for Rwanda illustrates this growing interest in climate vulnerability. In a comprehensive report for the Rwandan government, disasters and climate change feature as a cross-cutting issue because of the reliance of most of the population on rain-fed subsistence agriculture on erosion-prone hillsides. Heightened climate vulnerability is linked to broader socio-economic processes, including post-conflict resettlement, rapid demographic growth and ecological degradation. Disaster risk reduction is presented as the appropriate paradigm for institutional capacity-building aligned with cross-sectoral coordination on climate change adaptation. The declared goal for such efforts is to build the local resilience of those rural groups reliant on natural resources and climate-sensitive livelihoods.[59] Implementation of these, and other, recommendations from the UNEP report fed into wider UN developmental assistance for Rwanda. And major donor commitments – notably UK government capitalisation with £22.5 million of a national fund for environment and climate change – are supporting Rwandan efforts to promote green growth within its economic development and poverty reduction strategy.[60] UNEP's contribution to the environmental and management policies of the Rwandan government attests to the institutional strengthening made possible by such technical-managerial assistance, though the

public deference shown to the host government is at odds with security concerns raised elsewhere in the UN. For this is a regional geopolitical setting of continued (lower-level) hostilities in which the Kagame regime has played an active part, supporting rebel insurgencies and illegal mineral exploitation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A UN Security Council Report in 2012 alleged Rwandan government responsibility in breaking a UN arms embargo and, through its direct military support for rebels, also complicity in violations of IHL and human rights.[61] Insofar as such practices increase conflict-related stresses in the region, their effects are relevant to UN assessments of socio-environmental vulnerability. It is telling that they do indeed register in UNEP's post-conflict environmental assessment for the Congolese government (where the host government is the putative victim), though not in terms of IHL.[62]

Occupations and external military interventions comprise a discrete group of war-related conditions often associated with complex emergencies, throwing up singular challenges for humanitarianism. Protracted military occupations, as with the Indonesian takeover of East Timor (1975-1999) and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory (since 1967), strain IHL norms designed for limited periods of foreign military authority, and also render routine what would otherwise be exceptional demands for humanitarian assistance. The environmental protection duties of occupying powers are at best uncertain and fare badly against a general backdrop of weak international enforcement of humanitarian obligations: as Barnett observes in regard to Timor-Leste, unchecked rights violations by military forces are themselves powerful drivers of vulnerability to climate change.[63] The UNDP-sponsored Arab Human Development Report 2009 is notable for addressing directly the erosion of human security caused by occupation and military interventions, discussing threats to lives and livelihoods in Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territory and Somalia. In each case, conflict-induced environmental degradation is seen as accentuating the already high social vulnerability of civilian populations, although this is not explicitly linked to discussion elsewhere on climate change impacts.[64]

A UNDP-funded project (2008-2010) to develop a climate change adaptation strategy for the Palestinian Authority represents arguably its most sustained human security analysis of climate vulnerability in the context of a military occupation. Informed by UNDP adaptation policy frameworks, it treated food and water security for people as the thematic focus for a vulnerability assessment designed to identify risks conditions and response capabilities in the face of climate variability and (projected) climate change.[65] The vulnerability assessment drew on consultations with state and civil society actors in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as a review of climate change modelling applied to the eastern Mediterranean. A revealing parallel with the UN-supported climate

adaptation planning for the Sudanese government was, at least initially, a technical-managerial framing of climate risk detached from ongoing and pervasive conditions of coercive rule. The disruptive impacts of climate variability and change are seen to threaten communities already experiencing impaired lives and livelihoods; but the humanitarian sense is from managerial norms of natural disaster risk reduction rather than IHL rules regulating the protection of civilians and their living conditions from serious, indiscriminate harm.[66] I note below the tensions in this process, because Palestinian "stakeholders" insisted that Israeli occupational practices generated and exacerbated environmental stresses, justifying a conflict-structured rendering of climate vulnerability. While faithful to the conflict experience of the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank, these stakeholder representations unsettled the largely technical approach of UNDP. Yet, as Conca and Wallace suggest for UNEP's post-conflict environmental assessments (including their Palestinian assessments), the adoption of such a depoliticised stance seems to be necessary for achieving cooperation with host governments.[67] This is not to suggest that UN bodies and other international organisations do not monitor occupational practices or consider their environmental impacts, but rather that an operational focus on managing biophysical risks largely avoids politically charged questions about IHL accountability for the production of social and ecological harm.

LOCATING CLIMATE INSECURITY IN (POST)CONFLICT SPACES

The exposure of people to armed conflict and related hostile acts creates conditions of violence for which humanitarian action is conventionally justified; that is, the provision of relief to individuals and groups facing immediate threats to their lives and freedoms. For societies scarred by conflict, serious disruptions to life as a direct or indirect consequence of climate change may also legitimate humanitarian assistance and, by their interactions with present or past hostilities, are likely to bridge two discrete humanitarian traditions responding, respectively, to armed conflict and natural disasters. There is recognition by UNDP that conflicts typically exacerbate disaster impacts and vulnerabilities, although these disaster-conflict interfaces are strongly context-dependent. Both through slow- and rapid onset effects, climate change is seen as having the potential to intensify a vicious circle of violence, social vulnerability and disaster risk.[68] The category of complex emergencies offers an integrative optic for addressing multiple trajectories of harm in situations of chronic conflict and collapsing political authority, triggering a system-wide humanitarian response through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. However, unless they cause immediate and substantial harm, consideration of climate impacts is likely to be crowded out in complex

emergencies by an urgent humanitarian focus on protecting civilians from the effects of armed conflict.[69]

The broad notion of human security advanced by the UN provides a more holistic framework for identifying, and addressing, critical threats endangering people in (post)conflict (and other) contexts. Human security shares with humanitarianism a cosmopolitan regard for the welfare of "humanity" as such – part of a family of universalist discourses, including human development and human rights, underpinning the identity of the UN and many international NGOs.[70] At the same time, there is a distinctive moral grammar to human security which, applied to (post)conflict areas, facilitates a shift from relief-oriented action to preventive measures for risk reduction informed by a biopolitical concern with securing human lives. OCHA, UNDP and UNEP all have an interest in climate change impacts as relevant to assessments of environmental vulnerability in (post)conflict areas. To be sure, there is a notable gap between policy advocacy on climate change as a major source of human security (notably by OCHA and UNDP) and (post)conflict environmental assessments. Even in cases where climate vulnerability is a salient theme, human security as such is not a common label for categorising threats to people. Nevertheless, the framing and content of these assessments by all three UN bodies reveal that "climate insecurity" is understood overwhelmingly in terms of vulnerable people, with common references to food security and water security, as well as evaluations of the resilience of communities with climate-sensitive livelihoods.[71] I now argue that, at least for the (post)conflict assessments summarised above, the defining of human life in biopolitical terms downplays the effects of organised violence in producing climate insecurity. This is evident in: (i) the rendering of climate change as an extrinsic source of harm; (ii) the displacement of responsibility for conflict-related harms; and (iii) the use of depoliticised notions of capacity-building for climate adaptation.

(i) Climate Change as an External Driver of Vulnerability
It is not surprising that OCHA, UNDP and UNEP defer to UNFCCC and IPCC communications for authoritative accounts of climate risk. In the Human Development Report 2007/2008, UNDP represents "dangerous" climate change – defined, in line with the IPCC, as a rise in global average temperatures above two degrees centigrade compared to pre-industrial levels – as "an avoidable catastrophe" of large-scale human development losses, but one probable in the light of IPCC emissions scenarios.[72] Whilst acknowledging the role of pre-existing social and economic vulnerabilities in mediating climate impacts, five "risk multipliers" for human development reversals are forecast to result from climate-induced biophysical shocks: reduced agricultural productivity, water insecurity, greater exposure to coastal flooding and extreme weather events,

ecosystem collapse, and increased health risks.[73] The sourcing of climate danger in externally received, biophysical stresses is characteristic of the (post)conflict environment and climate reports discussed above. None of these studies, understandably, had independent scientific capacity for regional climate modelling or downscaling, relying on IPCC scenarios and other relevant climate science. In the case of Pakistan, the climate change framing of the 2010 floods in a report by the joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit bore little relation to UN operational activities in the country. Across the more substantive assessments of climate vulnerability, there is a tendency uncritically to adopt climate change scenarios from the scientific literature without setting out the methodological caveats and simplifying assumptions inherent in their use. References to international climate science lend epistemic authority to the emphasis in these reports on external environmental stresses as determinants of climate vulnerability, reproducing a largely natural hazards perspective on climate risk.

Registering climate risks in terms of current and projected biophysical impacts necessarily captures objective environmental changes to which people are, or may be, exposed. The analytical choice for climate assessments in (post)conflict settings is the explanatory weight accorded to these effects in relation to the social vulnerability of affected populations. Use of a natural disasters framing can stress extreme events and climate features over root causes of vulnerability.[74] The UN (post)conflict assessments examined <u>were</u> open to the social production of climate vulnerability, including the effects of organised violence. However, the consideration of conflict impacts was more as an additional set of biophysical stresses on a vulnerable population than as experiential threats to, or violations of, the lives of affected individuals. There is a significant difference here between the UNEP post-conflict environmental assessments treating <u>legacy</u> effects of discrete conflict episodes and the climate studies of OCHA (East and Central Africa) and UNDP (occupied Palestinian territory) addressing <u>ongoing</u> "low-intensity" conflict or military occupation. In the latter case of continuing hostilities, projections of climate-driven biophysical impacts on food and water security were challenged by Palestinian consultees insisting that Israeli occupational practices were constitutive of their social vulnerability to climate risk, notably the appropriation and degradation of environmental resources for military and settlement purposes.[75]

(ii) <u>Displacing Responsibility for Conflict-Related Harms</u>
As the idea of human security is in principle context-specific, its application to (post)conflict societies could reasonably be expected to integrate climate threats with the effects of current or past conflicts. The threat or use of violent force related to armed conflict or military occupation is of course likely to be the principal danger to lives and livelihoods in the absence of peaceful relations.

IHL features clear rules governing the behaviour of those engaged in hostilities, including responsibility for conflict-related harms deemed to be breaches of IHL: the global coherence of these rules has been weakened by the "war on terror" and their implementation is at best selective, although their legal force arguably remains robust.[76] I noted above that there are uncertainties over the environmental obligations of IHL, and climate change impacts will test further the humanitarian rules designed to protect civilians. Yet human security and humanitarian readings of climate change drawing on a disaster risk reduction model are, I argue, inappropriate by themselves for settings in which systemic coercion conditions people's lives. As David Keen notes more generally for humanitarian action, the tendency to attribute damages to extrinsic factors removes responsibility from social and political actors.[77] In (post)conflict areas a focus on "unintentional" climate damage can render even more indistinct the responsibility of combatants and occupying forces to safeguard the lives and living conditions of civilians, displacing responsibility for conflict-related harms.

Disaster risk reduction is central to UN development support and is being integrated into relevant strategic planning tools, including Common Country Assessments and the UN Development Assistance Framework.[78] Again, though, risk reduction – including for climate change – is located firmly within the natural disasters inflection of humanitarian and development aid, detached from IHL and the singular hazards faced by people in (post)conflict zones. For complex emergencies this division can be both counter-intuitive and dysfunctional. Thus, the UN-led humanitarian responses to flooding in Pakistan were hampered by competing needs assessments and notions of vulnerability. Confusion was sown within the international relief effort by the simultaneous use of "natural disaster" and "complex emergency" designations, causing disagreements over the appropriateness of cooperating with the Pakistan military to distribute assistance. In Sudan, a climate change adaptation report facilitated by UNEP and UNDP highlighted climate impacts on agriculture, health and water resources,[79] yet nowhere was there any acceptance by the Sudanese government of its role in the appropriation and destruction of the agricultural assets of southern ethnic groups (let alone the major casualties caused by the Sudanese military and government-armed militia groups). Even a separate UNDP project (2004-2009) for reducing the "root-causes" of violent disputes between pastoralists and farmers across Sudan chose to frame these as "natural resource based conflicts" triggered by severe droughts and the growth of mechanised farming, ignoring the complicity of the national government in stoking violence due to its manipulation of farm leases and grain markets for political gain.[80]

(iii) <u>The Depoliticisation of Capacity-Building for Climate Adaptation</u>

Of course, the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality informing the standard definition of humanitarianism serve, as Barnett and Weiss note,[81] an important function in securing access to those in need, especially in situations of armed conflict. An apolitical stance is practically proven to increase the likelihood of successfully negotiating access with those coordinating hostile acts, though the cost of not offending a host government or military administration is often to avoid confronting perpetrators of harm and also to treat those suffering as little more than victims. Yet the ambitious goal of human security approaches is to avoid or mitigate both immediate threats and longer-term reversals in human development. And proponents of human security have claimed that this preventive goal can encompass critical reflection on, and policy engagement with, the political-economic drivers of climate vulnerability.[82] UN assessments of climate vulnerability in (post)conflict zones favour technical-managerial interventions to build up the "resilience" of vulnerable populations to climate risks. The discourse of "stakeholder participation" guiding institutional capacity-building for climate adaptation suggests a break from subjectivities of victimhood, but often sidesteps the political conditions necessary for the meaningful involvement of civilian populations subject to the effects of armed conflict or foreign military occupation. For example, Palestinians equate effective agency for climate change adaptation with sovereign authority over their land and water resources. Post-conflict contexts, where organised violence is largely or completely suppressed, offer more scope for developing politically inclusive strategies for climate change adaptation.[83]

The importing into conflict-prone countries of techniques for climate risk reduction responds to a distinctive Western anxiety over the growing prospect of "climate conflict" and "climate refugees".[84] Climate vulnerability assessments and institution building for climate adaptation thus accompany other donor-led interventions addressing perceived governance failings in (post)conflict spaces. International organisations justify these interventions as protecting the core freedoms of indigenous populations, whilst at the same time legitimating liberal order-building under the rubric of good climate governance. It is disputable whether human securitisation has been so one-sided and functional for the geopolitical interests of global Northern states as some critics of biopolitical governance maintain,[85] but the eco-managerial articulation of (post) conflict climate vulnerability by UN agencies has bypassed important aspects of the conflict-regulation strand of humanitarianism, notably whether there are IHL responsibilities attached to the production of climate vulnerability and harm in societies affected by conflict.

CONCLUSION

OCHA, UNDP and UNEP have all identified climate risks as relevant to their work in areas affected by armed conflict. At the policy level, they also share UN-wide commitments to treat human beings, rather than states, as the most appropriate referent of security. Human security – broadly understood as freedom from serious threats to health and welfare – justifies assessments of climate impacts relative to other stresses affecting populations in (post)conflict regions: biophysical shocks or pressures as a result of (projected) climate change have become a thematic concern for humanitarian initiatives and longer-term development assistance. While human security terminology has less operational currency than may be expected from the policy advocacy of these UN bodies (notably OCHA and UNDP), the selected (post)conflict environmental assessments clearly express ideas consistent with the human securitisation of climate change; for example, a recurrent, people-centred interest in food security and water security, as well as a focus on climate-sensitive livelihoods. I have argued that their work on climate vulnerability – located within post-conflict environmental assessments (UNEP) or climate adaptation initiatives (OCHA, UNDP) – is informed by a biopolitical paradigm of disaster risk reduction addressing the resilience and circulatory freedom of vulnerable people. This is of course a normative agenda, but one that assumes a depoliticised stance in accord with UN principles of neutrality and impartiality.

The favouring of the natural disasters domain of humanitarian reason to understand climate insecurity mirrors UN strategies on disaster reduction, offering a logical template for climate risk management in (post)conflict regions. Given their expertise and experience of working in areas affected by violent conflict or foreign military occupation, it is nevertheless striking that OCHA, UNDP and UNEP have conspicuously avoided the conflict regulation domain of IHL when examining climate vulnerability in (post)conflict settings. Political neutrality and operational access to those in need are cogent reasons why these agencies may choose to refrain from scrutinising particular conditions and trajectories of violence. As I claim above, though, the consequences of this bureaucratic comity include the displacement of responsibility for conflict-related harms and the depoliticisation of capacity-building for climate resilience. Sourcing serious climate threats as externally received biophysical impacts – as what Fassin coins a "pure form of misfortune" beyond human responsibility[86] – is more amenable to technical-managerial interventions placed outside geopolitical relations of power.

Yet biopolitical assessments of climate vulnerability in (post)conflict spaces have their own geopolitical conditions and effects. The creation of humanitarian spaces of exception is itself the

imposition, by states and international organisations, of sovereign authority on behalf of global peace and security.[87] In this sense, the human securitisation of climate change is arguably one facet of liberal order-building in unstable regions; and the elision of the IHL inflection of humanitarian action reveals a biopolitical preference for the adaptive fitness of a population in the face of biophysical stresses rather than as a politically transformative community of citizens. The latter choice, for (post)conflict societies, would bear full witness to violence and its effects, mapping out a "geopolitical distribution of corporeal vulnerability" in line with all legal norms of responsibility for serious harm.[88]

Notes

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5. D. Keen, <u>Complex Emergencies</u> (Cambridge: Polity 2008) p.3; OCHA, <u>OCHA Orientation Handbook on Complex Emergencies</u> (Geneva: OCHA 1999).

6. C. Sampford and R. Thakur (eds.), <u>Responsibility to Protect and Sovereignty</u> (Aldershot: Ashgate 2013).

7. Grove, 'Insuring "Our Common Future"?' (note 1); A. Oels, 'Rendering Climate Change Governable by Risk: From Probability to Contingency', <u>Geoforum</u> 45 (2013) pp.17-29. For a wider critique of human security see D. Chandler and N. Hynek (eds.), <u>Critical Perspectives in Human Security: Rethinking Emancipation and Power in International Politics</u> (London: Routledge 2011).

8. See M. Foucault, <u>The Birth of Biopolitics</u> (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2008) and the preceding course of lectures translated as <u>Security, Territory, Population</u> (London: Palgrave Macmilan, 2007).

9. UNDP, <u>Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World</u> (New York: United Nations Development Programme 2007); CARE International, <u>Humanitarian Impacts of Climate Change: Mapping Emerging Trends and Risk Hotspots</u> (London: CARE International 2009); L.M. Braman, P. Suarez and M.K. Van Aalst, 'Climate Change Adaptation: Integrating Climate Science into Humanitarian Work', <u>International Review of the Red</u> Cross 879 (2010) pp.693-712.

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11. C. Calhoun, 'A World of Emergencies: Fear, Intervention and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Order', <u>Canadian Journal of Sociology</u> 41/4 (2004) pp.373-95; and 'The Idea of Emergency: Humanitarian Action and Global (Dis)Order', in D. Fassin and M. Pandolfi (eds.), <u>Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions</u> (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books 2010) pp.29-58. See also D. Fassin, <u>Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present Times,</u> (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2012) pp.247-52.

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29. On the location of the Human Development Office in UNDP see S. Browne, <u>The UN Development Programme and system</u> (Abingdon: Routledge 2011) p.51.

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62. UNEP, <u>République Démocratique du Congo: Évaluation Environmentale Post-Conflit</u> (Nairobi: UNEP 2012) pp.53-73. Rwandan involvement and, support for, armed groups is mentioned at p.56.

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64. UNDP, <u>Arab Human Development Report: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries</u> (New York: UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States 2009) pp.48-50. Interestingly, the Egyptian political scientist serving as the lead author of the report accused UNDP of altering, for political reasons, the final draft in order to <u>lessen</u> its emphasis on occupation and military interventions as a major driver of human security in the region: H. Nafaa, 'UNDP Credibility', <u>Al-Ahram Weekly Online</u> 957 (23 - 29 July 2009).

65. B. Lim and E. Spanger-Siegfried (eds.), <u>Adaptation Policy Frameworks for Climate Change: Developing Strategies, Policies and Measures</u> (Cambridge: CUP 2005); UNDP, <u>Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Programme of Action for the Palestinian Authority</u> (Jerusalem: UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People 2010).

66. UNDP, ibid, pp. 50-53; M. Mason, M. Zeitoun and Z. Mimi (2012), 'Compounding Vulnerability: Impacts of Climate Change on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank', <u>Journal of Palestine Studies</u> 41/3 (2012) pp.38-55.

67. Conca and Wallace (note 56) p.81.

68. Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, <u>Disaster-Conflict Interface: Comparative Experiences</u> (New York: UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery 2011) pp.15-21.

69. There are also mechanisms for the emergency activation of international humanitarian actors that can be triggered separately by natural disasters or conflict: Inter-Agency Standing Committee, <u>Humanitarian System-wide Emergency Activation: Definition and Procedures</u> (Geneva: IASC Secretariat 2012).

70. D. Gasper, 'The Idea of Human Security', in K. O'Brien, A.S. Clair and B. Kristoffersen (eds.), <u>Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security</u> (Cambridge: CUP 2010) pp.23-46.

71. This methodological choice follows the advice of MacFarlane and Khong that it is more productive to focus on content rather than terminology when examining the reception of human security ideas: MacFarlane and Khong, <u>Human Security and the UN</u> (note 30) p.10. Humanitarian actors also distinguish between policy expressions of human security ideas and operational use: personal communication, senior ICRC official, Amman, Jordan 13 November 2013.

72. UNDP, <u>Human Development Report 2007/2008</u> (note 9) pp.35-36.

73. Ibid, pp.27, 30.

74. Gaillard (note 14) p.224.

75. Mason et al. (note 66) p.49.

76. M. Sassòli, 'The Implementation of International Humanitarian Law: Current and Inherent Challenges', <u>Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law</u> 10/1 (2007) pp. 45-73.

77. Keen (note 5) p. 9.

78. UNDG, <u>Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction into the CCA and UNDAF</u> (New York: United Nations Development Group 2009).

79. Republic of Sudan (note 55) p.3: see also S.A. Zakieldeen, Sumaya Ahmed, <u>Climate Change: A Vulnerability Assessment for Sudan</u> (London: International Institute for Environment and Development 2009).

80. UNDP Sudan, <u>Reduction of Resource Based Conflicts among Pastoralists and Farmers</u> (Khartoum, UNDP Sudan 2012). On the role of the Sudanese government see Keen (note 5) pp.109-15.

81. M. Barnett and T.G. Weiss, <u>Humanitarianism Contested: Where Angels Fear to Tread</u> (Abingdon: Routledge 2011) pp.9-10.

82. Adger, 'Climate Change, Human Well-Being and Insecurity' (note 3); K. O'Brien, A.S. Clair and B. Kristoffersen (2010), 'The Framing of Climate Change: Why It Matters', in K. O'Brien et al., <u>Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security</u> (note 3) pp.11-14.

83. Matthew and Hammill (note 33).

84. K.E. McNamara and C. Gibson, ''We Do Not Want to Leave Our Land': Pacific Ambassadors at the United Nations Resist the Category of Climate Refugees', <u>Geoforum</u> 40/3 (2009) pp.475-83; B. Hartmann, 'Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Policy Discourse', <u>Journal of International Development</u> 22/2 (2010) pp.233-46; C. Farbotko and H. Lazrus, 'The First Climate Refugees? Contesting Global Narratives of Climate Change in Tuvalu', <u>Global Environmental Change</u> 22/2 (2012) pp.382-90.

85. For example, Chandler (note 14) and Duffield (note 14).

86. Fassin (note11) p.199.

87. M. Agier and F. Bouchet-Saulnier, 'Humanitarian Spaces as Spaces of Exception', in F. Weissman (ed.) <u>In the Shadow of 'Just Wars': Violence, Politics and Humanitarian Action</u> (London: Hirst & Company 2004) pp.297-313; S. Elden, <u>Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty</u> (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2009) pp.55-61.

88. The term "geopolitical distribution of corporeal vulnerability" comes from Butler (note 35) pp.29-30. On the changing attributes of adaptation from resilience to transformation see Pelling (note 3), summarised at pp.50-51.